Roberts del. Publish'd for Bells British Theatre July 8. 1776. J. Thornthwaite Sc.

Mr. ROSS in the Character of ESSEX.

Essex: Am I not your General? and was I not so by Virtue of this Staff?

BELL'S EDITION.

THE

EARL of ESSEX;

A TRAGEDY, by HENRY JONES.

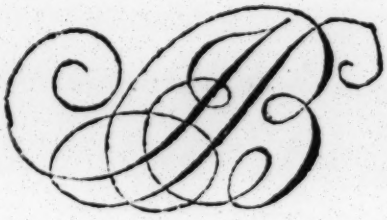
AS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden.

Regulated from the Prompt-Book,

By PERMISSION of the MANAGERS,

By Mr. WILD, Prompter.



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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

To the Right Honourable

PHILIP,

EARL of CHESTERFIELD, &c.

Knight of the moſt noble Order of the Garter.

MY LORD,

THAT you may be induced to read this dedication through, I ſhall begin by aſſuring you, that I do not intend to pay you one compliment. To praiſe you is unneceſſary on all hands; to your Lordſhip, it is offenſive; and for the public, they do not want to be informed of your character: it lives, at preſent, in the mouths of all men, and poſterity will find it in the hiſtory of Europe.

My deſign, my Lord, is to expreſs my own gratitude, not to delineate your merit. 'Twas your Lordſhip firſt took notice of me, in my original obſcurity, whence you brought me into life, and have ſince continued to encourage me by your countenance and favour; and I cannot help confeſſing, that I have a kind of honeſt pride in having it known, that your Lordſhip thought me worthy to be taken under your protection.

Theſe, my Lord, are the general obligations that I owe you, of which I have wiſhed to raiſe ſome monument, that may remain as long as my name ſhall be remembered; but I have more particular reaſons for preſenting you with this tragedy, as it was your Lordſhip firſt pointed out to me the ſubject, and when it was finiſhed gave me the firſt aſſurance of its ſucceſs, by your approbation. I could not therefore avoid taking advantage of this opportunity, to acknowledge, publicly, all theſe favours; and to aſſure you, that I am

Your Lordſhip's moſt obliged,

Moſt obedient, and

Very humble ſervant,

HENRY JONES.

To

To Mr. HENRY JONES, on his Tragedy of the EARL of ESSEX.

AS ancient heroes are renown'd in ſong,
For reſcuing virtue from th' oppreſſor's wrong,
So ſhall thy fame, who ſnatch'd this well-wrought tale
From dulneſs' gloomy pow'r, o'er time prevail.
Long had theſe ſcenes, wound up with dext'rous a
In ſpite of reaſon, gain'd upon the heart;
Thaw'd ev'ry frozen fountain of the eye,
We wept, 'till even Sorrow's ſelf was dry;
Yet judgment ſcorn'd what paſſion had approv'd,
And the head wonder'd how the heart was mov'd.
But, with a fate revers'd, thy work ſhall boaſt,
That ſoundeſt judgments ſhall admire it moſt.
Cloath'd in the eaſy grandeur of thy lines,
The ſtory brightens, as the diction ſhines.
Renew'd with vigour as in age 'tis grown,
The wond'ring ſcene ſees beauties not its own.
Thus, worn with years, in Afric's ſultry vales,
The creſted ſnake ſhifts off his tarniſh'd ſcales;
Aſſumes freſh beauties, brighter than the old,
Of changing colours, intermix'd with gold:
Reburniſh'd, baſks beneath the ſcorching ray,
Shines with new glories in the face of day,
Darts fiercer lightning from his brandiſh'd tongue,
Rolls more ſublime, and ſeems, at leaſt, more young.
No more ſhall noiſe, and wild, bombaſtic rage
Uſurp th' applauding thunder of the ſtage;
Fuſtian no more ſhall paſs for true ſublime,
Nor nonſenſe muſically float in rhyme;
Nor, in a worſe extreme, ſhall creeping proſe,
For nature and ſimplicity, impoſe:
By thee reform'd, each vicious taſte ſhall fail,
And critic Juſtice hold aloft her ſcale.
Whence beams this dazzling luſtre on thy mind?
Whence this vaſt fund of knowledge in mankind,
Unletter'd genius? Whence haſt thou been taught
This dignity of ſtile, this majeſty of thought;
This rapid fire, by cool correctneſs rul'd,
And every learned elegance, unſchool'd?

Say, hath great Shakeſpeare's tranſmigrated ſhade
Inform'd thy maſs, or lent thee friendly aid?
To him, bleſs'd bard, untaught, 'twas alſo giv'n,
T' aſcend, on native wings, invention's brighteſt heaven*,
Aſſuming Phœbus' port; and in his train,
The muſes all, like handmaids, not in vain,
Crouch for employment.——
The paſſions too, ſubſervient to his will,
Attentive wait on his ſuperior ſkill;
At the command of his enchanting art,
Unlock the burſting flood-gates of the heart,
And in the rapid, headlong ſtream, bear down
The vanquiſh'd ſoul, and make it all his own.
Happy the clime, diſtinguiſh'd be the age,
When genius ſhoots ſpontaneous for the ſtage;
Not too luxuriant, nor too trimly neat,
But, in looſe wildneſs, negligently great.
O may the gen'rous plants, ſo wond'rous rare,
Ne'er want the tender hand of foſt'ring care;
But, like Apollo's fav'rite tree, be ſeen,
For ever flouriſhing, for ever green.

M'NAMARA MORGAN.

* Alluding to the prologue to Henry V.

PROLOGUE.

OUR desp'rate bard a bold excurſion tries,
Tho' danger damp'd his wings, he dar'd to riſe:
From hope, high rais'd, all glorious actions ſpring;
'Tis hence that heroes conquer, poets ſing;
Even he may feel the ſoul-exalting fire,
Fame prompts the humbleſt boſom to aſpire.
Without a guide this raſh attempt he made,
Without a clue from art, or learning's aid.
He takes a theme where tend'reſt paſſions glow,
A theme, your grandſires felt with pleaſing woe.
Eſſex' ſad tale he ſtrives to cloath anew,
And hopes to place it in a ſtronger view.
Poets, like painters, may, by equal law,
The labour'd piece from different maſters draw;
Perhaps improve the plan, add fire and grace,
And ſtrike th' impaſſion'd ſoul through all the face.
How far our author has ſecur'd a claim
To this exalted palm, this wiſh'd-for fame,
Your generous ſentiments will ſoon declare:
Humanity is ever prone to ſpare.
'Twere baſeneſs then your candour to diſtruſt;
A Britiſh audience will, at leaſt, be juſt.
A flattering truth he fearful muſt confeſs,
His ſanguine friends made promiſe of ſucceſs;
But that, he fears, their ardent wiſhes wrought,
Since partial favour ſeldom ſees a fault.
Then bear, like patient friends, this firſt eſſay,
His next ſhall thank you in a nobler way.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

The Earl of *Eſſex* — —	Mr. Clinch.
Earl of *Southampton* — —	Mr. Wroughton.
Lord *Burleigh* — —	Mr. Hull.
Sir Walter *Raleigh* — —	Mr. L'Eſtrange.
Lieutenant of the Tower — —	Mr. Thompſon.

WOMEN.

Queen *Elizabeth* — — —	Mrs. Melmoth.
Counteſs of *Rutland* — —	Mrs. Hartley.
Counteſs of *Nottingham* — —	Miſs Sherman.

Lords, Ladies, and Attendants.

THE

THE EARL of ESSEX.

ACT I.

SCENE, *an Antichamber in the Palace.*

Enter Burleigh *and* Raleigh.

BURLEIGH.

THE bill, at length, has paſs'd oppoſing numbers,
Whilſt crowds ſeditious clamour'd round the ſenate,
And headlong faction urg'd its force within.

Ral. It has, my lord.—The wiſh'd-for day is come,
When this proud idol of the people's hearts
Shall now no more be worſhipp'd—Eſſex falls.
My lord, the minute's near that ſhall unravel
The myſtic ſchemes of this aſpiring man.
Now Fortune, with officious hand, invites us
To her, and opens wide the gates of greatneſs,
The way to power. My heart exults; I ſee,
I ſee, my lord, our utmoſt wiſh accompliſh'd!
I ſee great Cecil ſhine without a rival,
And England bleſs him as her guardian ſaint.
Such potent inſtruments I have prepar'd,
As ſhall, with ſpeed, o'erturn this hated man,
And daſh him down, by proof invincible.

Bur. His day of glory now is ſet in night,
And all my anxious hopes, at laſt, are crown'd.
Thoſe proofs againſt him, Raleigh—

Ral. All arrived.

Bur. Arrived! how? when?

Ral. This very hour, my lord:
Nay more, a perſon comes, of high diſtinction,

To

To prove ſome ſecret treaties made by Eſſex,
With Scotland's monarch, and the proud Tyrone.
Bur. How ſay'ſt? to prove 'em?
Ral. Ay, my lord, and back'd
With circumſtances of a ſtronger nature.
It now appears, his ſecretary Cuff,
With Blunt and Lee, were deep concern'd in this
Deſtructive ſcheme, contriv'd to raiſe this lord,
And ruin Cecil. O, it is a ſubtile,
A deep laid miſchief, by the earl contriv'd,
In hour malignant, to o'erturn the ſtate,
And (horror to conceive!) dethrone the queen.
Bur. Theſe gladſome tidings fly beyond my hopes!
The queen will liſten now, will now believe,
And truſt the counſel of her faithful Burleigh.
'Let this moſt lucky circumſtance be kept
'A ſecret ſtill from public obſervation.—'
Diſpoſe 'em well, till kind occaſion calls
Their office forth, leſt prying craft mean while
May tamper with their thoughts, and change their minds:
Let them, like batteries conceal'd, appear
At once, both to ſurprize and to deſtroy.
Ral. This ſudden ſhock, my lord, this weighty ſtroke,
Muſt preſs him headlong down to deep deſtruction:
Indignant Fate marks out this dreaded man,
And fortune now has left him.
Bur. Thank the changeling;
His ſervile faction ſoon will ſtand aghaſt,
And ſink, at diſtance, from his threat'ning fall.
Ral. His headſtrong friend, the bold Southampton too,
Now finds his raſh endeavours all defeated;
And ſtorms at thee and the impeaching commons.
Bur. Let him rave on, and rage—The lion in
The toils entangled, waſtes his ſtrength, and roars
In vain; his efforts but amuſe me now.—
Ral. 'What triumphs in my ſoul ſhall reign, to ſee
'This ſanguine and o'erbearing man brought down
'Beneath my envy; nay, below my ſcorn.
'How young ambition ſwells my riſing hopes!
'Tis Heaven, O Cecil, calls thro' England's voice,
'And juſtice, bending from above, invites us.'

Enter

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. My lord, the lady Nottingham deſires,
With much impatience, to attend your lordſhip.

Bur. What may the purport of her bus'neſs be?
Her tender wiſhes are to Eſſex ty'd
In love's ſoft fetters, and endearing bands:
'For him, each melting thought awakes deſire,
'And all her ſoul is laviſh'd on that lord,—
'This unexpected viſit much ſurprizes me!
'What can it mean? She would not come to pry
'And pick out tales for Eſſex' ear!—Why let her;
'I'm arm'd ſecure againſt her arts and cunning.
'Beſides, her errand comes too late; for now
'Her minion's doom'd to fall.'—Conduct her in.

[*Exit* Gent.

And you, my Raleigh, watch Southampton's ſteps;
With care obſerve each movement of his friends;
That no advantage on that ſide be loſt. [*Exit* Ral.
'Southampton's Eſſex' ſecond ſelf; he ſhares
'His headlong councils, and adopts his ſchemes;
'His daring heart, and bold, ungovern'd tongue,
'Are both enliſted in the raſh deſigns
'Of this proud lord, nor knows a will but his:
'A limb ſo fix'd muſt with the body fall.'

Enter Lady Nottingham.

Not. Thrice hail to reſcu'd England's guiding genius!
His country's guardian, and his queen's defence.
Great Burleigh, thou whoſe patriot boſom beats
With Albion's glory and Eliza's fame;
Who ſhield'ſt her perſon, and ſupport'ſt her throne;
For thee, what fervent thanks, what offer'd vows,
Do proſtrate millions pay!

Bur. Bright excellence,
This fair applauſe too highly over-rates,
Too much extols, the low deſerts of Cecil.

Not. What praiſes are too high for patriot-worth;
Or what applauſe exceeds the price of virtue?
My lord, conviction has at laſt ſubdu'd me,
And I am honour's proſelyte:—too long
My erring heart purſued the ways of faction;
I own myſelf t' have been your bitt'reſt foe,

And

And join'd with Eſſex in each foul attempt
To blaſt your honour, and traduce your fame.
Bur. Tho' ne'er my wiſhing heart could call you friend,
Yet honour and eſteem I always bore you;
And never meant, but with reſpect to ſerve you.
' It grieves me, madam, to have thus offended,
' Where moſt my wiſhes labour'd to oblige.
Not. ' I know your honour and your virtues well;
' Your public plans, deſign'd for England's good,
' And all your private merit's weight. But, oh,
' How blind is reaſon in the maze of paſſion!
' I ſought your ruin, labour'd for your fall.
' But, if repentance may atone for guilt,
' Or ſelf-reproach for ſharpeſt penance paſs,
' No mortal breaſt e'er felt more woe than mine,
' And Burleigh now may rank me for his friend.
Bur. ' That ſuch a worth of ſoul ſhould be abus'd!
' Could I accuſe my heart but of a thought
' To do you wrong; if any purpoſe ever
' Againſt your welfare in my ſoul aroſe,
' That look'd with malice on your ſhining merit,
' Your matchleſs beauty, or your brighter virtues,
' Then let me live deſpis'd, a proverb made
' To ev'ry paſſing ſlave; nay more, the ſcorn
' And trampled footſtool of the man I hate.'
Not. It is enough, my lord, I know it well,
And feel rekindling virtue warm my breaſt;
Honour and gratitude their force reſume
Within my heart, and every wiſh is yours.
O Cecil, Cecil, what a foe haſt thou,
A deadly foe, whilſt hated Eſſex lives!
Bur. I know it well, but can aſſign no cauſe.
Not. Ambition's reſtleſs hand has wound his thoughts
Too high for England's welfare; nay, the queen
Scarce ſits in ſafety on her throne, while he,
Th' audacious Eſſex, freely treads at large,
And breathes the common air. Ambition is
The only god he ſerves, to whom he'd ſacrifice
His honour, country, friends, and every tie
Of truth, and bond of nature; nay, his love.
Bur. ' I find this buſ'neſs work as I would have it.

' [*Aſide.*

The

The man that in his public duty fails,
On private virtue will diſdainful tread,
As ſteps to raiſe him to ſome higher purpoſe:
In vain each ſofter wiſh would plead with him,
No tender movement in his ſoul prevails,
And mighty love, who rules all nature elſe,
Muſt follow here in proud ambition's train.
Not. Pronounce it not, my ſoul abhors the ſound,
Like death.——Oh, Cecil, will you kindly lend
Some pity to a wretch like me?
Bur. Command,
Madam; my power and will are yours. 'I feel
'Your wrongs, I feel the baſe returns you've met
'From this ungrateful and diſloyal man,
'Tho' oft your goodneſs ſcreen'd him from reproof.
'Believe me worthy to partake your grievance,
'Accept my ſervice, and employ my power.'
Not. Will Cecil's friendly ear vouchſafe to bend
Its great attention to a woman's wrongs,
Whoſe pride and ſhame, reſentment and deſpair,
Riſe up in raging anarchy at once,
To tear with ceaſeleſs pangs my tortur'd ſoul?
Words are unequal to the woes I feel,
And language leſſens what my heart endures.
Paſſion repuls'd with ſcorn, and proud diſdain,
Recoils indignant on my ſhrinking ſoul,
Beats back my vital ſprings, and cruſhes life.
Bur. Madam, your wrongs, I muſt confeſs, are great;
Yet ſtill, I fear, you know not half his falſhood.
'Who, that had eyes to look on beauty; who,
'That had a heart to feel that beauty's power;'
Who, but the falſe, perfidious Eſſex, could
Prefer to Nottingham a Rutland's charms?
Start not—By heav'n, I tell you nought but truth,
What I can prove, paſt doubt; that he receiv'd
The lady Rutland's hand, in ſacred wedlock,
The very night before his ſetting out
For Ireland.
Not. Oh, may quick deſtruction ſeize 'em!
May furies blaſt, and hell deſtroy their peace!
May all their nights———
Bur. I pray, have patience, Madam,

Reſtrain a while your rage; curſes are vain.
But there's a ſurer method to deſtroy him;
And if you'll join with me, 'tis done: he falls.
Not. Ha! ſay'ſt thou, Burleigh! Speak, my genius, ſpeak;
Be quick as vengeance' ſelf to tell me how.
Bur. You muſt have heard the commons have impeach'd him,
And we have proofs ſufficient for his ruin.
But the queen—you know how fair he ſtands
In her eſteem; and Rutland too, his wife,
Hath full poſſeſſion of the royal ear.
What then avail impeachments, or the law's
Severeſt condemnation, while the queen
May ſnatch him from the uplifted hand of juſtice?
Here then, my Nottingham, begins thy taſk:
Try ev'ry art t'incenſe the queen againſt him,
Then ſtep between her and the lady Rutland,
'Let not her fondneſs find the leaſt acceſs
'To the queen's heart to counterwork our purpoſe.'
Obſerve Southampton too, with jealous eye;
Prevent, as much as poſſible, his ſuit:
For well I know he will not fail to try
His eloquence on the behalf of Eſſex.
Not. It ſhall be done; his doom is fix'd; he dies.
Oh, 'twas a precious thought! I never knew
Such heart-felt ſatisfaction! Eſſex dies,
And Rutland, in her turn, ſhall learn to weep.
The time is precious; I'll about it ſtrait.
Come, vengeance, come, aſſiſt me now to breathe
Thy venom'd ſpirit in the royal ear. [*Exit* Nottingham.
Bur. There ſpoke the very genius of the ſex.
A diſappointed woman ſets no bounds
To her revenge. Her temper's form'd to ſerve me.

Enter Raleigh.

Ral. The lord Southampton, with ungovern'd rage,
Reſents aloud his diſappointed meaſures.
I met him in the outward court; he ſeeks
In haſte your lordſhip, and, forgetting forms,
Purſues me hither, and demands to ſee you.
Bur. Raleigh, 'tis well—Withdraw—Attend the queen.
Leave me to deal with this o'erb g man. [*Exit* Ral.

Enter

Enter Southampton.

South. Where is the man, whom virtue calls her friend?
I give you joy, my lord!—Your quenchleſs fury
At length prevails,—and now your malice triumphs.
You've hunted honour to the toil of faction,
And view his ſtruggles with malicious joy.

Bur. What means, my lord?

South. Oh, fraud! ſhall valiant Eſſex
Be made a ſacrifice to your ambition!
Oh, it ſmells foul indeed, of rankeſt malice,
And the vile ſtateſman's craft. You dare not ſure
Thus bid defiance to each ſhew of worth,
Each claim of honour: dare not injure thus
Your ſuffering country in her braveſt ſon!

Bur. But why ſhould ſtern reproach her angry brow
Let fall on me? Am I alone the cauſe
That gives this working humour ſtrength? Do I
Inſtruct the public voice to warp his actions?
Juſtice, untaught, ſhall poiſe th' impartial ſcales,
And every curious eye may mark the beam.

South. The ſpecious ſhield, which private malice bears,
Is ever blazon'd with ſome public good;
Behind that artful fence, ſculk low, conceal'd
The bloody purpoſe, and the poiſon'd ſhaft;
Ambition there, and envy neſtle cloſe;
From thence, they take their fatal aim unſeen;
And honeſt merit is the deſtin'd mark.

Bur. 'Your warm diſtemper'd zeal puts raſhly by
'The cool directing hand of wholſome reaſon.
'No imputation foul ſhall reſt on me;
'My honeſt purpoſes defy aloud
'The ſlander-ſpreading tongue of buſy faction,
'To caſt its venom on my fair report,
'Or tell poſterity, thus Cecil did.'
My country's welfare, and my queen's command,
Have ever been my guiding ſtars through life,
My ſure direction ſtill.—To theſe I now
Appeal;—from theſe, no doubt, this lord's miſconduct
Hath widely ſtray'd; and reaſon, not reviling,
Muſt now befriend his cauſe.

South. How ill had Providence

Diſpos'd the ſuffering world's oppreſt affairs
Had ſacred right's eternal rule been left
To crafty politicians' partial ſway!
Then power and pride would ſtretch th' enormous graſp,
And call their arbitrary portion, juſtice:
Ambition's arm, by av'rice urg'd, would pluck
The core of honeſty from virtue's heart,
And plant deceit and rancour in its ſtead:
Falſehood would trample then on truth and honour,
And envy poiſon ſweet benevolence.
Oh, 'tis a goodly group of attributes,
And well beſits ſome ſtateſman's righteous rule!
Out, out upon ſuch baſe and bloody doings!
The term of being is not worth the ſin;
No human boſom can endure its dart.
Then put this cruel purpoſe from thee far,
Nor let the blood of Eſſex whelm thy ſoul.

Bur. 'Tis well, my lord! your words no comment need;
'No doubt, they've well explain'd your honeſt meaning;
'Tis clear and full.—To parts, like yours, diſcretion
'Wou'd be a clog, and caution but incumbrance.'
Yet mark me well, my lord, the clinging ivy
With th' oak may riſe, but with it too muſt fall.

South. Thy empty threats, ambitious man, hurt not
The breaſt of truth. Fair innocence, and faith,
Thoſe ſtrangers to thy practis'd heart, ſhall ſhield
My honour, and preſerve my friend.—In vain,
Thy malice, with unequal arm, ſhall ſtrive
To tear th' applauded wreath from Eſſex' brow;
His honeſt laurel, held aloft by fame,
'Above thy blaſting reach, ſhall ſafely flouriſh,'
Shall bloom immortal to the lateſt times;
Whilſt thou, amidſt thy tangling ſnares involv'd,
Shalt ſink confounded, and unpitied fall.

Bur. Rail on, proud lord, and give thy choler vent:
It waſtes itſelf in vain; the queen ſhall judge
Between us in this warm debate. To her
I now repair; and in her royal preſence
You may approve your innocence and [illegible]h.
Perhaps you'll meet me there.—Ti[illegible], farewel.

[*Exit.*
South.

South. Confuſion wait thy ſteps, thou cruel monſter!
My noble and illuſtrious friend betray'd,
By crafty faction and tyrannic power,
His ſinking trophies, and his falling fame,
Oppreſs my very ſoul. I'll to the queen,
Lay all their envy open to her view,
Confront their malice, and preſerve my friend. [*Exit.*

The Queen diſcovered, ſitting on her throne.
Raleigh, *Lords, and Attendants.*

Q. Without conſulting me! preſumptuous man!
Who governs here?—What! am not I your queen?
You dar'd not, were he preſent, take this ſtep.

Ral. Dread ſovereign, your ever faithful commons
Have, in their gratitude and love for you,
Preferr'd this ſalutary bill againſt him.

Enter Burleigh.

Q. You, my lord Burleigh, muſt have known of this.
The commons here impeach the earl of Eſſex
Of practiſing againſt the ſtate and me.
Methinks I might be truſted with the ſecret.
Speak, for I know it well, 'twas thy contrivance.
Ha! was it not? You dare not ſay it was not.

Bur. I own my judgment did concur with theirs.
His crimes, I fear, will juſtify the charge,
And vindicate their loyalty and mine.

Q. Ha! tell not me your ſmooth, deceitful ſtory!
I know your projects, and your cloſe cabals.
You'd turn my favour into party feuds,
And uſe my ſceptre as the rod of faction:
But Henry's daughter claims a nobler ſoul.
I'll nurſe no party, but will reign o'er all,
And my ſole rule ſhall be to bleſs my people:
Who ſerves them beſt has ſtill my higheſt favour:
This Eſſex ever did.

Enter Southampton.

Behold, Southampton,
What a baſe portrait's here! The faithful Eſſex
Here drawn at large aſſociating with rebels,
To ſpoil his country and dethrone his queen.

South. It is not like.—By heav'n the hand of envy
Drew theſe falſe lines, diſtorted far from truth
And honour, and unlike my noble friend

[*Exit South.*

As light to ſhade, or hell to higheſt heav'n.
Then ſuffer not, thou beſt of queens, this lord,
This valiant lord, to fall a ſacrifice
To treachery and baſe deſigns; who now
Engages death in all his horrid ſhapes,
Amidſt a hardy race, inur'd to danger;
But let him face to face, this charge encounter,
And every falſhood, like his foes, ſhall fly.
Q. To me you ſeem to recommend ſtrict juſtice,
In all her pomp of power. But are you ſure
No ſubtle vice conceal'd aſſumes her garb?
Take heed, that malice does not wear the maſk,
Nor envy deck her in the borrow'd guiſe.
'Rancour has often darken'd reaſon's eye,
'And judgment winks, when paſſion holds the ſcale.'
Impeach the very man to whom I owe
My brighteſt rays of glory! Look to it, lords,
Take care, be cautious on what ground you tread;
Let honeſt means alone ſecure your footing.
Raleigh and you withdraw, and wait our leiſure.
[*Exeunt* Raleigh *and* South.
Lord Burleigh, ſtay; we muſt with you have farther
Conf'rence.—I ſee this baſe contrivance plain.
Your jealouſy and pride, your envy of
His ſhining merit, brought this bill to light.
But mark me, as you prize our high regard
And favour, I command you to ſuppreſs it:
Let not our name and power be embarraſs'd
In your perplexing ſchemes. 'Twas you began,
And therefore you muſt end it.
Bur. I obey.
Yet humbly would intreat you to conſider
How new, unpopular, this ſtep muſt be,
To ſtand between your parliament's enquiry
And this offending lord.—We have ſuch proofs—
Q. Reſerve your proofs to a more proper ſeaſon,
And let them then appear. But once again
We charge you, on your duty and allegiance,
To ſtop this vile proceeding; and to wait
Till Eſſex can defend himſelf in perſon.
If then your accuſations are of force,
The laws, and my conſent, no doubt, are open.

He

He has my ſtrict command, with menace mix'd,
To end effectually this hated war,
Ere he preſume to quit the Iriſh coaſt.
Bur. Madam, my duty now compels me to—
Q. No more! ſee that my orders be obey'd. [*Ex.* Bur.
Eſſex a traitor!—it can never be—
His grateful and his honeſt ſoul diſdains it.—
I know him hot, ambitious, raſh, impatient;
But then he's firmly anchor'd in his duty:
Tho' ſtormy paſſions toſs him to and fro.
Can he prove falſe? ſo high advanc'd, ſo honour'd,
So near my favour—and—I fear ſo near
My heart!—Impoſſible.—This Burleigh hates him,
And, his rival, therefore would deſtroy him;
But he ſhall find his narrow ſchemes defeated.
In vain their fraudful efforts ſhall combine
To ſhake my ſettled ſoul, my firm deſign;
Reſolv'd to lift bright virtue's palm on high,
Support her grandeur, and her foes defy. [*Exit.*

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

Enter Burleigh *and* Raleigh.

BURLEIGH.

ESSEX arriv'd! Confuſion to my hopes!
His preſence will deſtroy me with the queen.
I much ſuſpect he had ſome private notice,
Perhaps, a punctual order, to return.
He lurks too near her heart.—What's to be done?
'Prepare the witneſſes with ſpeed; apprize
'The lady Nottingham.—Southampton's pride,
'And Rutland's too, will lift the creſt again.
'But fly, my Raleigh, ſend me Nottingham.
[*Exit* Raleigh.
'We muſt alarm the queen with new commotions
'In many parts of her dominions rais'd:
'All this, and more, muſt now be paſs'd for truth.
'This ſudden blow has ſtruck me to the ſoul;
'Tis gone too far, he dies—proud Eſſex now,
'Or Cecil falls.' Now is th' important criſis—

Keep

Keep up thy uſual ſtrength; my better genius,
Direct my ſteps to cruſh my mortal foe.

Enter Queen and Raleigh.

Q. It cannot be! Return'd without my leave!
Againſt my ſtrict command!—Impoſſible!

Ral. Madam, the earl is now at court, and begs
An audience of your majeſty.

Q. Amazing!
What! break his truſt! deſert his high command
Forſake his poſt, and diſobey his queen!
'Tis falſe—invented all.—You wiſh it ſo.

Bur. Madam, I wiſh ſome other rumours falſe:
Reports, I fear, of great concern to you.

Q. What rumours? what reports? Your frown would much
Denote: your preface ſeems important.—Speak.

Bur. Some new commotions are of late ſprung up
In Ireland, where the weſt is all in arms,
And moves with haſty march to join Tyrone,
And all his northern clans. A dreadful power!
Nay more, we have advices from the borders
Of ſudden riſings, near the banks of Tweed!
'Tis thought, to favour an attempt from Scotland.
Mean while, Tyrone embarks ſix thouſand men
To land at Milford, and march where Eſſex
Shall join them with his friends.

Q. In league with James!
And plotting with Tyrone! It cannot be.
His very pride diſdains ſuch perfidy.
But is not Eſſex here without my leave!
Againſt my ſtrict command! that, that's rebellion.
The reſt, if true, or falſe, it matters not.
What's to be done?—admit him to my preſence?
No, no—my dignity, my pride forbid it.
Ungrateful man, approach me not; riſe, riſe,
Reſentment, and ſupport my ſoul! Diſdain,
Do thou aſſiſt me—Yes, it ſhall be ſo.

Bur. I ſee ſhe muſes deep; her mind works upwards,
And paints its ſtruggling efforts in her face.
Tyrone's invaſion wakes her fear and anger,
And all her ſoul is one continued ſtorm.

Q. For once my pride ſhall ſtoop; and I will ſee

This

This raſh, audacious, this once favour'd man;
But treat him as his daring crimes deſerve.

Enter Southampton.

South. [*kneeling.*] Permit me, Madam, to approach you thus;
Thus lowly to preſent the humble ſuit
Of the much injur'd, faithful, earl of Eſſex,
Who dares not, unpermitted, meet your preſence.
He begs, moſt gracious queen, to fall before
Your royal feet, to clear him to his ſovereign,
Whom, next to heav'n, he wiſhes moſt to pleaſe.
Let faction load him with her labouring hand,
His innocence ſhall riſe againſt the weight,
If but his gracious miſtreſs deign to ſmile.

Q. Let him appear. [*Exit.* South.

Now to thy trying taſk,
My ſoul! Put forth, exert thy utmoſt ſtrength,
Nor let an injur'd queen be tame.—Lie ſtill,
My heart, I cannot liſten to thee now.

Enter Eſſex *and* Southampton.

Eſſex. Forgive, thou injur'd majeſty, thou beſt
Of queens, this ſeeming diſobedience. See,
I bend ſubmiſſive in your royal preſence,
With ſoul as penitent, as if before
Th' all-ſearching eye of heav'n. But, oh, that frown!
My queen's reſentment wounds my inmoſt ſpirit,
Strikes me like death, and pierces through my heart.

Q. You have obey'd, my lord! you've ſerv'd me well!
My deadly foes are quell'd! and you come home
A conqueror! Your country bids you welcome!
And I, your queen, applaud!——Triumphant man!
What! is it thus that Eſſex gains his laurels?
What! is it thus you've borne my high commiſſion?
How durſt you diſregard your truſted duty,
Deſert your province, and betray your queen?

Eſſex. I came to clear my injur'd name from guilt,
Imputed guilt, and ſlanderous accuſations.
My ſhame was wafted in each paſſing gale,
Each ſwelling tide came loaded with my wrongs;
And echo ſounded forth, from faction's voice,
The traitor Eſſex.—Was't not hard, my queen,
That while I ſtood in danger's dreadful front,

En-

Encountering death in every ſhape of terror,
And bleeding for my country?——Was't not hard,
My mortal enemies at home, like cowards,
Shou'd in my abſence baſely blaſt my fame?
Q. It is the godlike attribute of kings
To raiſe the virtuous and protect the brave.
I was the guardian of your reputation,
What malice, or what faction then could reach you?
My honour was expos'd, engag'd for yours:
But you found reaſon to diſlike my care,
And to yourſelf aſſum'd the wreſted office.
Eſſex. If aught diſloyal in this boſom dwells,
If aught of treaſon lodges in this heart,
May I to guilt and laſting ſhame be wedded,
The ſport of faction, and the mark of ſcorn,
The world's deriſion, and my queen's abhorrence,
Stand forth the villain, whoſe invenom'd tongue
Would taint my honour and traduce my name,
Or ſtamp my conduct with a rebel's brand!
Lives there a monſter in the haunts of men,
Dares tear my trophies from their pillar'd baſe,
Eclipſe my glory and diſgrace my deeds?
Q. This ardent language, and this glow of ſoul,
Were nobly graceful in a better cauſe;
Where virtue warrants, and where truth inſpires:
But injur'd truth, with brow invincible,
Frowns ſtern reproof upon the falſe aſſertion,
And contradicts it with the force of facts.
From me you have appeal'd, ungrateful man;
The laws, not I, muſt liſten to your plea.
Go, ſtand the teſt ſevere, abide the trial,
And mourn, too late, the bounty you abus'd.
[*Exeunt Queen*, Southampton, &c.
Eſſex. Is this the juſt requital, then, of all
My patriot-toils and oft-encounter'd perils,
Amidſt th' inclemencies of camps and climes?
Then be it ſo.——Unmov'd and dauntleſs, let me
This ſhock of adverſe fortune firmly ſtand.
But yet, methinks, 'tis ſomewhat ſudden too!
My greatneſs, now depriv'd of each ſupport,
Which bore ſo long its envy'd weight aloft,
Muſt quick to ruin fall, and cruſh my hopes.

Enter

Enter Southampton.

South. Alas, my lord! the queen's diſpleaſure kindles
With warmth increaſing; whilſt lord Burleigh labours
T' inflame her wrath, and make it ſtill burn fiercer.

Eſſex. I ſcorn the blaze of courts, the pomp of kings;
I give them to the winds, and lighter vanity;
Too long they've robb'd me of ſubſtantial bliſs,
Of ſolid happineſs, and true enjoyments.
But lead me to my mourning love; alas!
She ſinks beneath oppreſſing ills; ſhe fades,
She dies for my afflicting pangs, and ſeeks
Me, ſorrowing, in the walks of woe.——Diſtraction!
Oh, lead me to her, to my ſoul's deſire.

South. Let caution guide you in this dangerous ſtep.
Conſider well, my lord, the conſequence—
For ſhould the queen (forbid it Heaven!) diſcover
Your private loves, your plighted hands, no power
On earth could ſtep between you and deſtruction.
'Lock up this ſecret from the prying world.'

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. My lord of Eſſex, 'tis the queen's command,
That you forthwith reſign your ſtaff of office;
And further, ſhe confines you to your palace.

Eſſex. Welcome, my fate. Let fortune do her utmoſt;
I know the worſt, and will confront her malice,
And bravely bear the unexpected blow.

Bur. The queen, my lord, demands your quick compliance.

Eſſex. Go, then, thou gladſome meſſenger of ill,
And, joyful, feaſt thy fierce rapacious ſoul
With Eſſex' ſudden and accompliſh'd fall.
The trampled corſe of all his envy'd greatneſs,
Lies proſtrate now beneath thy ſavage feet;
But ſtill th' exalted ſpirit mounts above thee.
Go, tell the queen thy own deteſted ſtory:
Full in her ſight diſcloſe the ſnaky labyrinths
And lurking ſnares you plant in virtue's path,
To catch integrity's unguarded ſtep.

Bur. How ill repaid are public toils and cares,
'Where active honeſty, with ſtation join'd,
'Incurs but calumny, and foul reproach!'
Your country has impeach'd, your queen accus'd you;

Enter To

To theſe addreſs your beſt defence, and clear
Your queſtion'd conduct from diſloyal guilt.
What anſwer to the queen ſhall I return?

Eſſex. My ſtaff of office I from her receiv'd,
And will to her, and her alone, reſign it.

Bur. This bold refuſal will incenſe the queen.
This arrogance will make your guilt the ſtronger.

[*Exit.*

Scuth. Suſtain, my noble friend, thy wonted greatneſs;
Collect thy fortitude, and ſummon all
Thy ſoul, to bear with ſtrength this cruſhing weight,
Which falls ſevere upon thee; whilſt my friendſhip
Shall lend a helping hand, and ſhare the burthen.
I'll hence with ſpeed, and to the queen repair,
And all the power of warmeſt words employ,
To gain you yet one audience more, and bring
Her majeſty to milder thoughts. Farewel. [*Exit.*

Eſſex. As newly wak'd from all my dreams of glory,
Thoſe gilded viſions of deceitful joys,
I ſtand confounded at the unlook'd-for change,
And ſcarcely feel this thunder-bolt of fate.
The painted clouds, which bore my hopes aloft,
Alas, are now vaniſh'd to yielding air,
And I am fall'n indeed!———
How weak is reaſon, when affection pleads!
How hard to turn the fond, deluded heart
From flatt'ring toys, which ſooth'd its vanity!
The laurell'd trophy, and the loud applauſe,
The victor's triumph, and the people's gaze;
The high-hung banner, and recording gold,
Subdue me ſtill, ſtill cling around my heart,
And pull my reaſon down.

Enter Rutland.

Rut. Oh, let me fly
To claſp, embrace, the lord of my deſires
My ſoul's delight, my utmoſt joy, my huſband!
I feel once more his panting boſom beat;
Once more I hold him in my eager arms,
Behold his face, and loſe my ſoul in rapture.

Eſſex. Tranſporting bliſs! my richeſt, deareſt treaſure!
My mourning turtle, my long abſent peace,
Oh, come yet nearer, nearer to my heart!

My

My raptur'd ſoul ſprings forward to receive thee:
Thou Heav'n on earth, thou balm of all my woe!
Rut. O, ſhall I credit then each raviſh'd ſenſe;
Has pitying Heav'n conſented to my prayer?
It has, it has; my Eſſex is return'd!
But language poorly ſpeaks the joys I feel;
Let paſſion paint, and looks expreſs my ſoul.
Eſſex. With thee, my ſweeteſt comfort, I'll retire
From ſplendid palaces, and glitt'ring throngs,
To live emboſom'd in the ſhades of joy,
Where ſweet content extends her friendly arms,
And gives encreaſing love a laſting welcome.
With thee I'll timely fly from proud oppreſſion,
Forget our ſorrows, and be bleſs'd for ever.
Rut. O, let us hence, beyond the reach of power;
Where fortune's hand ſhall never part us more.
In this calm ſtate of innocence and joy,
I'll preſs thee to my throbbing boſom cloſe.
Ambition's voice ſhall call in vain; the world,
The thankleſs world, ſhall never claim thee more,
And all thy buſineſs ſhall be love and me.
Eſſex. The queen, incens'd at my return, abandons me
To Cecil's malice, and the rage of faction.
I'm now no more the fav'rite child of fortune:
My enemies have caught me in the toil,
And life has nothing worth my wiſh, but thee.
Rut. Deluſive dream of fancied happineſs!
And has my fatal fondneſs then deſtroy'd thee?
Oh, have I lur'd thee to the deadly ſnare
Thy cruel foes have laid? 'Oh, have I put
'Thy life in peril? My officious tears
'Would needs inform thee of their wicked ſchemes.'
I dreaded Cecil's malice, and my heart,
Longing to ſee thee, with impatience liſten'd
To its own alarms; and prudence ſunk beneath
The force of love.
Eſſex. Forbear, my only comfort;
Oh, tell me not of danger, death, and Burleigh;
Let every ſtar ſhed down its mortal bane
On my unſhelter'd head: whilſt thus I fold
Thee in my raptur'd arms; I'll brave 'em all,
Defy my fate, and meet its utmoſt rigour.

Rut. Alas, my lord! conſider where we are.
Oh! 'tis the queen's apartment; death is here.
' I came to thee through peril's ambuſh'd path,
' And every danger riſqu'd for thy embrace.'
Each precious moment is by fate beſet,
And time ſtands trembling whilſt we thus confer.
Eſſex. Then, let us hence from this deteſted place;
My reſcu'd ſoul diſdains the houſe of greatneſs,
Where humble honeſty can find no ſhelter.
From hence we'll fly, where love and virtue call;
Where happineſs invites——that wiſh of all:
With ſweet content enjoy each bliſsful hour,
Beyond the ſmiles of fraud, or frowns of power.

[*Exeunt.*

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

Enter Burleigh *and* Nottingham.

NOTTINGHAM.

MY lord, I've ſought you out with much impatience.
You've had an audience of the queen: what follow'd?
Bur. Soon as I told her Eſſex had refus'd
To yield his dignities, and ſtaff of office,
' Againſt her high command, pronounc'd by me,'
She ſeem'd depriv'd of reaſon for a moment;
Her working mind betray'd contending paſſions,
Which, in her alter'd face, appear'd by turns.
She paus'd, like thunder in ſome kindling cloud,
The inſtant burſt with dreadful fury forth:
' And has th' ungrateful wretch defy'd my mandate?
' The proud, audacious traitor ſcorn'd my power?
' He dares not, ſure?—He dies—the villain dies.
' Then, ſudden, ſoften'd into milder ſounds,
' And call'd him raſh, unhappy, gallant Eſſex!
' On me her fury fell; my crafty plans
' Againſt his reputation, fame, and life,
' Had driven him to extremes—my malice did it—
' My envy was his bane; with all that paſſion
' Or fury could ſuggeſt.—I begg'd to know

' Her

'Her royal will concerning Eſſex; urg'd
'Again his inſolence.—Amaz'd, a while
'She ſtood, and wiſt not what to do.—At length,
'Collecting all her mind, theſe words ſhe utter'd:'—
Let him to the Tow'r.—I inſtantly withdrew,
But ſoon was countermanded, and deſir'd
To bring the earl of Eſſex to her preſence.
I like it not, and much I fear, ſhe'll ſtand
Between this high offender and the laws.

Not. Is Eſſex then ſecur'd?

Bur. Madam, he is;
And now comes guarded to the court.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. Madam, the queen
Is in her cloſet, and deſires to ſee you. [*Exit.*

Not. I attend her.

Bur. She wants, no doubt, to be adviſ'd by you.
Improve this fair occaſion, urge it home;
'She muſt be quick'ned by repeated ſtrokes
'Of freſh indignities, by Eſſex offer'd
'T' her royal perſon, and prerogative.
'Be circumſpect and cautious! mark her well.

Not. I know her foible. Eſſex long has had
An intereſt in her heart, which nothing can
O'erturn, except his own ungovern'd ſpirit.
It is, indeed, the inſtrument by which
We work, and cannot fail, if rightly us'd.

Bur. Madam, the queen expects you inſtantly.
I muſt withdraw, and wait the earl's arrival. [*Exeunt.*

Queen *diſcovered.*

Queen. Ill-fated, wretched man! perverſe and obſtinate!
He counterworks my grace, and courts deſtruction.
He gives his deadly foes the dagger to
Deſtroy him, and defeats my friendly purpoſe,
Which would, by ſeeming to abandon, ſave him.
Nor will he keep the maſk of prudence on
A moment's ſpace.—What! muſt I bear this ſcorn?
No: let me all the monarch reaſſume;
Exert my power, and be myſelf again.—
Oh, ill-performing, diſobedient heart!—
Why ſhrink'ſt thou, fearful, from thy own reſolve?

Enter Nottingham.

Thou com'ſt in time; I'm much diſturb'd, abus'd,
My Nottingham, and would complain to thee
Of inſolence, neglect, and high contempt.
Eſſex preſum'd to dictate laws within
My palace gates. How ſay'ſt thou, Nottingham?

Not. Surely, my gracious queen, it cannot be!
His heat and paſſion never cou'd impel him
To take ſo bold a ſtep, to ſuch raſh guilt:
Methinks his very honour ſhould prevent it.

Queen. Thy open, honeſt mind untutor'd ſeems
In life's ungrateful and degenerate ſchool;
Where ſtubborn vice in every form appears,
Mocking correction's ineffectual rod.
It is, indeed, an evil hard to bear;
This haughty man has wanton'd with my grace,
Abus'd my bounty, and deſpis'd my favours.
'That giving goodneſs ſhould profuſely flow
'T' enriſh the ſurly glebe, where only thorns
'And noxious weeds will ſpring!'
Reſentment, then, ſhall in her turn prevail;
To angry laws I'll give this victim up.

Not. His conduct has, I fear, been too unguarded:
His haſty temper knows not where to ſtop.
Ambition is the ſpur of all his actions,
Which often drives him o'er his duty's limits;
(At leaſt his enemies would have it ſo.)
But malice, Madam, ſeldom judges right.

Queen. Oh, Nottingham! his pride is paſt enduring;
This inſolent, audacious man forgets
His honour and allegiance;—and refus'd
To render up his ſtaff of office, here,
Beneath my very eye.

Not. Preſumptuous man!
Your faithful ſubjects will reſent this pride,
This inſolence, this treaſon to their queen;
They muſt, my gracious ſovereign.—'Tis not ſafe
To ſhield him longer from their juſt reſentment.
Then give him up to juſtice and the laws.

Queen. You ſeem well pleas'd to urge ſeverity.—
Offended majeſty but ſeldom wants
Such ſharp adviſers—Yet no attribute

So

So well befits the exalted ſeat ſupreme,
And power's diſpoſing hand, as clemency.
Each crime muſt from its quality be judg'd;
And pity there ſhould interpoſe, where malice
Is not th' aggreſſor. Hence! I'll hear no more.

Not. Madam, my ſentiments were well intended;
Juſtice, not malice, mov'd my honeſt zeal.
My words were echoes of the public voice,
Which daily riſes, with repeated cries
Of high complaint, againſt this haughty lord.
I pity, from my heart, his raſh attempts,
And much eſteem the man.

Queen. Go, Nottingham,
My mind's diſturb'd, and ſend me Rutland hither.
[*Exit.* Not.

O, vain diſtinction of exalted ſtate!
No rank aſcends above the reach of care,
Nor dignity can ſhield a queen from woe.
Deſpotic nature's ſtronger ſceptre rules,
And pain and paſſion in her right prevail.
Oh, the unpity'd lot, ſevere condition,
Of ſolitary, ſad, dejected grandeur!
Alone condemn'd to bear th' unſocial throb
Of heart-felt anguiſh, and corroding grief;
Depriv'd of what, within his homely ſhed,
The pooreſt peaſant in affliction finds,
The kind, condoling comfort of a dear
Partaking friend.——

Enter Counteſs of Rutland.

Rutland, I want thy timely
Counſel. I'm importun'd, and urg'd to puniſh—
But juſtice, ſometimes, has a cruel ſound,
'Where mercy may with prudence meet, and both
'Agree to ſoften rigour.'——Eſſex has,
No doubt, provok'd my anger, and the laws;
His haughty conduct calls for ſharp reproof,
And juſt correction. Yet I think him guiltleſs
Of ſtudied treaſons, or deſign'd rebellion.
Then, tell me, Rutland, what the world reports,
What cenſure ſays of his unruly deeds.

Rut. The world, with envy's eye beholds his merit:
Madam, 'tis malice all, and falſe report.

I know his noble heart, 'tis fill'd with honour:
No trait'rous taint has touch'd his generous ſoul;
His grateful mind ſtill glows with pure affection;
And all his thoughts are loyalty and you.

Queen. I grant you, Rutland, all you ſay, and think
The earl poſſeſs'd of many ſplendid virtues.
What pity 'tis, he ſhould afford his foes
Such frequent, ſad occaſions to undo him!

Rut. What human heart can, unafflicted, bear
Such manly merit in diſtreſs: 'ſuch worth
'Betray'd; ſuch valour in the toil,' beſet
By cruel foes, and faction's ſavage cry?
My good, my gracious miſtreſs, ſtretch, betimes,
Your ſaving arm, and ſnatch him from deſtruction,
From deadly malice, treachery, and Cecil.
O, let him live, to clear his conduct up!
My gracious queen, he'll nobly earn your bounty,
And with his deareſt blood deſerve your mercy.

Queen. Her words betray a warm, unuſual fervour;
Mere friendſhip never could inſpire this tranſport. [*Aſide.*
I never doubted but the earl was brave;
His life and valiant actions all declare it:
I think him honeſt too, but raſh and headſtrong.
I gladly would preſerve him from his foes,
And therefore am reſolv'd once more to ſee him.

Rut. Oh, 'tis a godlike thought, and Heav'n itſelf
Inſpires it. Sure ſome angel moves your heart,
Your royal heart, to pity and forgiveneſs.
This gracious deed ſhall ſhine in future ſtory,
And deck your annals with the brighteſt virtue;
Poſterity ſhall praiſe the princely act,
And ages yet to come record your goodneſs.

Queen. I'll hear no more—Muſt I then learn from you
To know my province, and be taught to move,
As each deſigning mind directs?—Leave me.

Rut. Her frowns are dreadful, and her eye looks terror.
I tremble for my Eſſex. Save him, Heav'n! [*Exit.*

Queen. Her warmth has touch'd me home. My jealous heart,
My fearful and ſuſpicious ſoul's alarm'd.

Enter Burleigh, Raleigh, *and others.*

Bur. The earl of Eſſex waits your royal will. [port

Queen. Let him approach—And now, once more, ſup-

Thy

Thy dignity, my ſoul; nor yield thy greatneſs
To ſtrong uſurping paſſion—But, he comes.

Enter Eſſex, Southampton, *guards.*

Eſſex. Permitted thus to bend, with proſtrate heart,
[*Kneels.*
Before your ſacred majeſty; I come,
With every grateful ſenſe of royal favour
Deeply engrav'd within my conſcious ſoul.

Queen. I ſent my orders for your ſtaff of office.

Eſſex. Madam, my envy'd dignities and honours,
I firſt from your own royal hand receiv'd;
And therefore juſtly held it far beneath me
To yield my trophies, and exalted power,
So dearly purchas'd in the field of glory,
To hands unworthy. No, my gracious queen,
I meant to lay them at your royal feet;
Where life itſelf a willing victim falls,
If you command.

Queen. High ſwelling words, my lord, but ill ſupply
The place of deeds, and duty's juſt demand.
In danger's onſet, and the day of trial,
Conviction ſtill on acting worth attends;
Whilſt mere profeſſions are by doubts encumber'd.

Eſſex. My deeds have oft declar'd, in danger's front,
How far my duty and my valour lead me.
Allegiance ſtill my thirſt of glory fir'd,
And all my bravely gather'd, envy'd laurels,
Were purchas'd only to adorn my queen.

Queen. 'Yet fact o'er fallacy muſt ſtill prevail,
'And eloquence to ſimple truth give way.'
Your guilty ſcorn of my intruſted power,
When with my mortal foes you tamely dally'd,
By hardy rebels brav'd, you poorly ſought
A ſervile pauſe, and begg'd a ſhameful truce.
Should Eſſex thus, ſo meanly compromiſe,
And loſe the harveſt of a plenteous glory,
In idle treaties, and ſuſpicious parly?

Eſſex. Oh, deadly ſtroke! My life's the deſtin'd mark.
The poiſon'd ſhaft has drunk my ſpirits deep.
Is't come to this? Conſpire with rebels! Ha!
I've ſerv'd you, Madam, with the utmoſt peril,
And ever glory'd in th' illuſtrious danger;

Where

Where famine fac'd me with her meagre mien,
And peſtilence and death brought up her train.
I've fought your battles, in deſpite of nature,
Where ſeaſons ſicken'd, and the clime was fate.
My power to parly, or to fight, I had
From you; the time and circumſtance did call
Aloud for mutual treaty and condition;
For that I ſtand a guarded felon here.—A traitor,
Hemm'd in by villains, and by ſlaves ſurrounded.

Queen. Shall added inſolence, with creſt audacious,
Her front uplift againſt the face of power.
Think not that injur'd majeſty will bear
Such arrogance uncheck'd, or unchaſtis'd.
No public truſt becomes the man, who treads,
With ſcornful ſteps, in honour's ſacred path,
And ſtands at bold defiance with his duty.

Eſſex. Away with dignities and hated truſt,
With flattering honours, and deceitful power!
Invert th' eternal rules of right and juſtice;
Let villains thrive, and out caſt virtue periſh;
Let ſlaves be rais'd, and cowards have command.
Take, take your gaudy trifles back, thoſe baits
Of vice, and virtue's bane.—'Tis clear, my queen,
My royal miſtreſs, caſts me off; nay, joins
With Cecil to deſtroy my life, and fame.

Queen. Preſuming wretch! Audacious traitor!

Eſſex. Traitor!

Queen. Hence from my ſight, ungrateful ſlave, and learn
At diſtance to revere your queen.

Eſſex. Yes; let
Me fly beyond the limits of the world,
And nature's verge, from proud oppreſſion far,
From malice, tyranny, from courts, from you.

Queen. Traitor! villain! [*Strikes him.*

Eſſex. Confuſion! what, a blow!
Reſtrain, good heav'n! down, down, thou rebel paſſion,
And, judgment, take the reins. Madam, 'tis well—
Your ſoldier falls degraded.
His glory's tarniſh'd, and his fame undone.
O, bounteous recompence from royal hands!
But you, ye implements, beware, beware,
What honour wrong'd, and honeſt wrath can act.

Queen,

Queen. What would th' imperious traitor do? My life
Beyond thy wretched purpoſe ſtands ſecure.
Go, learn at leiſure what your deeds deſerve,
And tremble at the vengeance you provoke.
[*Exeunt all but* Eſſex *and* Southampon.
Eſſex. Diſgrac'd and ſtruck! Damnation! Death were glorious.
Revenge! revenge!
South. Alas, my friend! what would
Thy rage attempt? Conſider well the great
Advantage now your raſh, ungovern'd temper
Affords your foes. The queen, incens'd, will let
Their fury looſe.—I dread the dire event.
Eſſex. Has honeſt pride no juſt reſentment left?
Nor injur'd honour feeling? Not revenge!
High heaven ſhall bear, and earth regret my wrongs.
Hot indignation burns within my ſoul.
I'll do ſome dreadful thing—I know not what;
Some deeds as horrid as the ſhame I feel,
Shall ſtartle nature, and alarm the world.
Then hence, like light'ning, let me furious fly,
To hurl deſtruction at my foes on high;
Pull down oppreſſion from its tyrant ſeat,
Redeem my glory, or embrace my fate.
[*Exeunt.*

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

Enter Queen *and* Nottingham.

QUEEN.

NOT taken yet!
Not. No, Madam; for the earl
Of Eſſex, leagu'd with deſperate friends, made ſtrong
And obſtinate reſiſtance; till, at length,
O'erpower'd by numbers, and increaſing force,
He fled for ſhelter to a ſmall retreat,
A ſummer-houſe upon the Thames; reſolv'd
To periſh, rather than ſubmit to power.
Queen. 'O, wretch deteſted! O, unheard of treaſon!
'Conſpire againſt my life, within my view!
'My reach! ſo near my very palace gates!
'Perfidious

'Perfidious monſter!—What can prudence do,
'Or human wiſdom, more than judge from outſide,
'And flattering likeneſs? Kings can ſee no farther.
'High heav'n, alone, can read the heart, in all
'Its utmoſt frauds, and myſtic characters.'
Oh, where ſhall majeſty beſtow its favours,
Since Eſſex has a traitor prov'd to me,
Whoſe arm hath rais'd him up to power and greatneſs;
Whoſe heart has ſhar'd in all his ſplendid triumphs,
And feels, ev'n now, his trait'rous deeds with pity?
But hence with pity, and the woman's pangs:
Reſentment governs, and the queen ſhall puniſh.

Enter Burleigh.

Bur. Illuſtrious queen, the traitors all are ſeiz'd.
Th' intelligence was true. Their black debates
Were held at Drury-houſe. The dire reſult
Was this: that Eſſex ſhould alarm the citizens
To open mutiny, and bold rebellion.
'On this pernicious errand went the earl,
'Join'd by his deſp'rate and ſeditious friends.'
Their purpoſe was to ſeize your royal palace,
And ſacred perſon; but your faithful people,
As by one mind inform'd, one zeal inſpir'd,
Roſe up at once, and with their virtue quell'd them.

Queen. Thanks to their honeſt, to their loyal hearts.
But ſay, were any perſons elſe concern'd,
Of high diſtinction, or of noted rank?

Bur. Yes, madam, many more, ſeduc'd of late,
'Mong whom the bold Southampton foremoſt ſtands,
'Precipitate and raſh; whoſe pow'r tho' great,
'Lags far behind his will to do you hurt.'
They're now our pris'ners, and are ſafe ſecur'd;
But Eſſex, with Southampton, and the reſt
Of greater note, I would not dare diſpoſe of
Without your royal mandate; and they now
Attend without, to know your final pleaſure.

Queen. Is this the juſt return of all my care;
My anxious toilſome days, and watchful nights?
Have I ſent forth a wiſh, that went not freighted
With all my people's good? Or, have I life,
Or length of days deſir'd, but for their ſake?
The public good is all my private care.

'Have

'Have I not ever thought the meaneſt ſubject,
'Oppreſs'd by power, was, in his juſt complaint,
'Above a king? What Britiſh boſom has
'By foreign tyranny been griev'd, whoſe wrongs
'I have not felt as mine, as mine redreſs'd?
'Or have I, juſtly, made a ſingle man
'My foe?' Then could I think this grateful iſle
Contain'd one traitor's heart? But, leaſt of all,
That Eſſex' breaſt ſhould lodge it? Call the monſter,
And let me meet this rebel, face to face.
Do you withdraw, and wait within our call.

[*Exit* Burleigh, &c.

Enter Eſſex.

You ſee we dare abide your dang'rous preſence,
Tho' treaſon ſits within your heart enthron'd,
And on that brow rebellion lours, where once
Such boaſted loyalty was ſaid to flouriſh.
How low the traitor can degrade the ſoldier!
Guilt glares in conſcious dye upon thy cheek,
And inward horror trembles in thine eye.
How mean is fraud! How baſe ingratitude!

Eſſex. Forbear reproach, thou injur'd majeſty,
Nor wound, with piercing looks, a heart already
With anguiſh torn, and bleeding with remorſe.
Your awful looks, alone, are arm'd with death,
And juſtice gives them terror.

Queen. Hapleſs man!
What cauſe could prompt, what fiend could urge thee on
To this deteſted deed? Could I from thee
Expect to meet this baſe return? from thee,
To whom I ought to fly, with all the confidence
That giving bounty ever could inſpire,
Or ſeeming gratitude and worth could promiſe?

Eſſex Alas! I own my crimes, and feel my treaſons;
They preſs me down beneath the reach of pity.
Deſpair alone can ſhield me from myſelf.
Oh, let the little ſpace I live be curs'd
With countleſs woes; let death, unpitied, come;
'My name be mention'd with the utmoſt ſcorn,'
If all my life can feel, or fame can ſuffer,
Can ſerve to mitigate my queen's diſpleaſure.

Queen. My pride forbids me to approach thee more;

My

My pity, rather, would relieve thy ſorrow.
'I ſee conviction, and ſevere remorſe,
'Within thy mind at work. But much I fear,
'That death alone can calm the raging conflict.'
The people's clamours, and my ſpecial ſafety,
Call loud for juſtice, and demand your life.
But if forgiveneſs from an injur'd queen
Can make the few ſhort hours you live more eaſy,
I give it freely from my pitying heart;
And wiſh my willing power could grant thee more.

Eſſex. Oh, ſounds angelic! goodneſs undeſerv'd!
My ſwelling heart can keep no bounds, my ſoul
Flows o'er.—And will my gracious queen forgive me?
Oh, let me proſtrate thus before you fall,
My better angel; and my guardian genius!
Permit me, royal miſtreſs, to announce
My faithful ſentiments, my ſoul's true dictates;
Vouchſafe your Eſſex but this one requeſt,
This only boon, he'll thank you with his laſt,
His dying breath, and bleſs you in his paſſage.

Queen. Riſe, my lord.
If aught you have to offer can allay
Your woes, and reconcile you to your fate,
Proceed;—and I with patient ear will liſten.

Eſſex. My real errors, and my ſeeming crimes
Would weary mercy, and make goodneſs poor:
And yet the ſource of all my greateſt faults
Was loyalty miſled, and duty in extreme.
So jealous was my ſanguine heart, ſo warm
Affection's zeal, I could not bear the leaſt
Suſpicion of my duty to my queen.
This drove me from my high command in Ireland;
This, too, impell'd me to that rude behaviour
Which juſtly urg'd the ſhameful blow I felt;
And this (O, fatal raſhneſs!) made me think
My queen had given her Eſſex up, a victim
To ſtateſmen's ſchemes, and wicked policy.
Stung by that piercing thought, my madneſs flew
Beyond all bounds, and now, alas! has brought me
To this moſt ſhameful fall; and, what's ſtill worſe,
My own reproaches, and my queen's diſpleaſure.

Queen. Unhappy man! My yielding ſoul is touch'd,
And pity pleads thy cauſe within my breaſt.
Eſſex. Say but, my gracious ſovereign, ere I go
For ever from your preſence, that you think me
Guiltleſs of all attempts againſt your throne,
And ſacred life. Your faithful Eſſex ne'er
Could harbour in his breaſt ſo foul a thought.
Believe it not, my queen. By Heav'n, I ſwear,
When in my higheſt pitch of glory rais'd,
The ſplendid noon of fortune's brighteſt ſun-ſhine,
Not ages of renown could yield me half
The joy, nor make my life ſo greatly bleſt,
As ſaving yours, tho' for a ſingle hour.
Queen. My lord, I think you honeſt. Nay, I own,
Whatever coldneſs I put on, was meant
To ſave you from the malice of your foes.
I judg'd your crimes, what you yourſelf pronounc'd 'em,
The raſh effect of an intemp'rate zeal.
Eſſex. Was ever wretch like Eſſex thus undone
By goodneſs in exceſs, and laviſh'd grace!
Oh, I could tear my erring heart, with theſe
Revenging hands!—What bleſſings have I loſt!
What clemency abus'd!—Now could I with
For lengthen'd life,—indeed for endleſs years.
A whole eternity's too ſhort, to ſhew
My pious ſorrows, and atone my folly.
Queen. 'Too well the paſſage to my heart he finds:
'And pity's hand lets in the dangerous gueſt.
'How weak is reaſon, when oppos'd to nature!' [*Aſide.*
My lord, I would convince you that I ſtill
Regard your life, and labour to preſerve it;
But cannot ſcreen you from a public trial.
With prudence make your beſt defence: but ſhould
Severity her iron juriſdiction
Extend too far, and give thee up condemn'd
To angry laws, thy queen will not forget thee.
Yet, leſt you then ſhou'd want a faithful friend,
(For friends will fly you in the time of need)
Here, from my finger, take this ring, a pledge
Of mercy; having this, you ne'er ſhall need
An advocate with me; for whenſoe'er
You give, or ſend it back, by Heav'n, I ſwear,

As I do hope for mercy on my ſoul,
That I will grant whatever boon you aſk.

Eſſex. Oh, grace ſurprizing! moſt amazing goodneſs!
Words cannot paint the tranſports of my ſoul!
Let me receive it on my grateful knees,
At once to thank and bleſs the hand that gives it.

Queen. Depend, my lord, on this; 'twixt you and me
This ring ſhall be a private mark of faith [*Gives the ring.*
Inviolate. Be confident, chear up,
Diſpel each melancholy fear, and truſt
Your ſovereign's promiſe; ſhe will ne'er forſake you.

Eſſex. Let Providence diſpoſe my lot as 'twill,
May watchful angels ever guard my queen;
May healing wiſdom in her counſels reign,
And firm fidelity ſurround her throne;
May victory her dreaded banners bear,
And joyful conqueſts crown her ſoldier's brow;
Let every bliſs be mingled in her cup,
And Heaven at laſt become her great reward! [*Exit.*

Queen. 'Tis done;
And yet foreboding tremors ſhake my heart.
Something ſits heavy here, and preſſes down
My ſpirits with its weight. What can it mean?
Suppoſe he is condemn'd; my royal word
Is plighted for his life; his enemies,
No doubt, will cenſure much.—No matter; let 'em;
I know him honeſt, and deſpiſe their malice.
'Unhappy ſtate, where mercy and compaſſion
'Too often meet with clamour and reproach!
'But princes muſt endure, for public good,
'The narrow cenſures of miſguiding crowds.'

Enter Counteſs of Rutland.

Rut. Where is the queen? I'll fall before her feet
Proſtrate, implore, beſiege her royal heart,
And force her to forgive.

Queen. What means this frenzy?

Rut. Oh, gracious queen, if ever pity touch'd
Your generous breaſt, let not the cruel axe
Deſtroy his precious life; preſerve my Eſſex,
'Preſerve, from ſhameful death, the noble, loyal,
'Oh, ſave the brave, the beſt of ſubjects.—Save'
My life, my hope, my joy, 'my all,' my huſband!

Q. Huſband!—What ſudden deadly blow is this!
Hold up, my ſoul, nor ſink beneath this wound.
You beg a traitor's life!
Rut. Oh, gracious queen!
He ever lov'd—was ever faithful, brave——
If nature dwells about your heart, Oh, ſpurn
Me not! My lord! my love! my huſband bleeds!
Q. Take her away.
Rut. 'I cannot let you go.
'Hold off your hands'—Here on this ſpot I'll fix,
Here loſe all ſenſe. Still let me ſtretch theſe arms,
Inexorable queen! he yet may live.
Oh, give him to my poor afflicted heart!
One pitying look, to ſave me from diſtraction.
Q. I'll hear no more. I'm tortur'd——take her hence.
Rut. Nay, force me not away.—Inhuman wretches!
Oh, mercy, mercy!—Then to thee, good Heav'n,
(My queen, my cruel queen, denies to hear me)
To thee I call, to thee for mercy bend.
Melt down her boſom's frozen ſenſe to feel
Some portion of my deadly grief, my fell
Diſtraction.—Turn, Oh, turn, and ſee a wife,
A tortur'd wife———
Q. Why am I not obey'd?
Rut. Nay, do not thus
Abandon me to fell deſpair. Juſt Heaven,
That ſees my ſorrows, will avenge the wrong,
This cruel wrong, this barbarous tyranny. [*Forced off.*
Q. Wedded to Rutland! Moſt unhappy pair!
And, Oh, ill-fated queen! Never till now
Did ſorrow ſettle in my heart its throne.
Now black deſpair its cloudy curtain draws
Around thy ſetting peace, where joy, alas!
No more ſhall dawn, nor ſmiling hope return.
Recall my pledge of ſafety from his hands,
And give him up to death!——But life or death
To me is equal now. 'Diſtraction dwells
'Within my tortur'd ſoul, and furies rend it.'
Unhappy ſtate, where peace ſhall never come!
One fatal moment has confirm'd my doom,
Turn'd all my comfort to inteſtine ſtrife,
And fill'd with mortal pangs my future life. [*Exit.*

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT II.

Enter Raleigh *and Lieutenant of the Tower.*

RALEIGH.

THEIR peers, with much indulgence, heard their plea,
And gave them ample ſcope for their defence;
But nought avail'd, their crimes were too notorious.
They bore their ſentence with becoming ſpirit;
And here's the royal mandate for their deaths.
The lady Nottingham!—What brings her hither?

Enter Lady Nottingham.

Not. Lieutenant, lead me to the earl of Eſſex,
I bring a meſſage to him from the queen.

Lieut. He's with his friend, the brave Southampton, madam,
Preparing now for his expected fate.
But I'll acquaint his lordſhip with your pleaſure. [*Exit.*

Ral. What means this meſſage? Does the queen relent?

Not. I fear ſhe does: 'for ſuch a war of paſſions,
'Such varying tumults never ſtrove within
'Her breaſt till now. Sometimes ſhe rails at Eſſex,
'And calls him villain, traitor, dooms him dead;
'Yet, in a moment, turns again to pity.
'At length ſhe ſent me to th' ungrateful earl,
'To learn if he could offer aught that might
'Induce her royal mercy to forgiveneſs.'
Go you to court, for Cecil there expects you.
I've promiſed to acquaint him with what paſſes
'Twixt me and Eſſex ere I ſee the queen.

Ral. Madam, I go. [*Exit.*

Not. Now, vengeance, ſteel my heart!
Offended woman, whilſt her pride remains,
To malice only and revenge will bow,
And every virtue at that altar ſacrifice.
But ſee, he comes, with manly ſorrow clad.
There was a time, that preſence cou'd ſubdue
My pride, and melt my heart to gentle pity.
I then could find no joy but in his ſmiles;

And

And thought him lovely as the ſummer's bloom;
But all his beauties are now hateful grown.

Enter Eſſex.

Eſſex. Whether you bring me death or life I know not.
But, if ſtrict friendſhip and remembrance paſt
May aught preſage to my afflicted heart,
Sure mercy only from thoſe lips ſhould flow,
And grace be utter'd from that friendly tongue.

Not. My lord, I'm glad you think me ſtill your friend.
I come not to upbraid but ſerve you now;
And pleas'd I am to be the meſſenger
Of ſuch glad tidings, in the day of trouble,
As now I bring you. When the queen had heard
That by the lords you were condemn'd to die,
She ſent me, in her mercy, here, to know
If you had aught to offer that might move
Her royal clemency to ſpare your life.

Eſſex. Could any circumſtance new luſtre add
To my dread ſovereign's goodneſs, 'tis the making
The kind, the generous Nottingham its meſſenger.
Oh, madam! could my glowing heart expreſs
Its grateful ſentiments, 'twou'd ſpeak ſuch language
As angels utter, when they praiſe their Maker.

Not. 'Tis well, my lord; but there's no time to ſpare,
The queen impatient waits for my return.

Eſſex. My heart was wiſhing for ſome faithful friend,
And bounteous Heav'n hath ſent thee to my hopes.
Know then, kind Nottingham, for now I'll truſt
Thee with the deareſt ſecret of my life;
'Tis not long ſince the queen (who well foreſaw
To what the malice of my foes would drive me)
Gave me this ring, this ſacred pledge of mercy;
And with it made a ſolemn vow to Heav'n,
That, whenſoever I ſhould give or ſend
It back again, ſhe'd freely grant whate'er
Requeſt I then ſhou'd make.

Not. Give, give it me,
My lord, and let me fly on friendſhip's wings,
To bear it to the queen, and to it add
My prayers and influence to preſerve thy life.

Eſſex. O! take it then—it is the pledge of life,
The precious ſpring that drives my vital ſtream

Around, and keeps my heart ſtill warm: 'it is
'The door of breath, the hope of joy, the ſhield
'Of friendſhip.'—O! it is my dear Southampton's
Laſt, laſt remaining ſtay, his thread of being,
Which more than words I prize.—O, take it then,
Take it, thou guardian angel of my life,
And offer up the incenſe of my pray'r!
O beg, intreat, implore her majeſty,
From public ſhame, and ignominious death,
And from th' obdurate axe, to ſave my friend.

Not. My lord, with all the powers that nature gave,
And friendſhip can inſpire, I'll urge the queen
To grant you your requeſt.

Eſſex. Kind Nottingham,
Your pious offices ſhall ever be
My fervent theme; and if my doubtful ſpan
Relenting Heav'n ſhould ſtretch to years remote,
Each paſſing hour ſhall ſtill remind my thoughts,
And tell me that I owe my all to thee:
My friend ſhall thank you too for lengthen'd life.
And now I fly with comfort to his arms,
To let him know the mercy that you bring. [*Exit.*

'*Not.* Yes, you ſhall feel my friendſhip's weight fall
'Upon your guilty ſoul, ungrateful man! [heavy
'Your falſe, diſdainful heart ſhall pay the fine
'Of love neglected, and of beauty ſcorn'd.' [*Exit.*

SCENE, *The Court.*

Enter Queen *and* Burleigh.

Queen. Ha! is not Nottingham return'd?

Bur. No, madam.

Q. Diſpatch a ſpeedy meſſenger to haſte her.
My agitated heart can find no reſt.
So near the brink of fate—unhappy man!

Enter Nottingham.

How now, my Nottingham, what news from Eſſex?
What ſays the earl?

Not. I wiſh, with all my ſoul,
Th' ungrateful taſk had been another's lot.
I dread to tell it—loſt, ill-fated man!

Q. What

Q. What means this myſtery, this ſtrange behaviour?
Pronounce—declare at once; what ſaid the earl?
Not. Alas, my queen, I fear to ſay; his mind
Is in the ſtrangeſt mood, that ever pride
On blackeſt thoughts begot. He ſcarce would ſpeak;
And when he did, it was with ſullenneſs,
With haſty tone, and down-caſt look.
Q. Amazing!
Not feel the terrors of approaching death!
Nor yet the joyful dawn of promis'd life!
Not. He rather ſeem'd inſenſible to both,
And with a cold indifference heard your offer;
Till warming up, by ſlow degrees, reſentment
Began to ſwell his reſtleſs, haughty mind,
And proud diſdain provok'd him to exclaim
Aloud, againſt the partial power of fortune,
And faction's rage. I begg'd him to conſider
His ſad condition, nor repulſe with ſcorn
The only hand that could preſerve him.
Q. Ha!
What! Said he nothing of a private import?
No circumſtance—no pledge—no ring?
Not. None, madam,
But with contemptuous front diſclaim'd at once
Your proffer'd grace; and ſcorn'd, he ſaid, a life
Upon ſuch terms beſtow'd.
Q. Impoſſible!
Could Eſſex treat me thus? You baſely wrong him,
And wreſt his meaning from the purpos'd point.
Recall betimes the horrid words you've utter'd;
Confeſs, and own the whole you've ſaid was falſe.
Not. Madam, by truth, and duty both compell'd,
Againſt the pleadings of my pitying ſoul,
I muſt declare (Heav'n knows with what reluctance)
That never pride inſulted mercy more.
He ran o'er all the dangers he had paſt;
His mighty deeds; his ſervice to the ſtate;
Accus'd your majeſty of partial leaning
To favourite lords, to whom he falls a ſacrifice;
Appeals to juſtice, and to future times,
How much he feels from proud oppreſſion's arm:

Nay,

Nay, ſomething too he darkly hinted at,
Of jealous diſappointment, and revenge.
Q. Eternal ſilence ſeal thy venom'd lips!
What haſt thou utter'd, wretch, to rouze at once
A whirlwind in my ſoul, which roots up pity,
And deſtroys my peace?
'Ha! he defies me then! Audacious traitor!'
Let him this inſtant to the block be led. [*Exit* Not.
Upbraid me with my fatal fondneſs for him!
Ungrateful, barbarous ruffian! Oh, Elizabeth!
Remember now thy long eſtabliſh'd fame,
Thy envy'd glory, and thy father's ſpirit.
Accuſe me of injuſtice too, and cruelty!
Yes, I'll this inſtant to the Tower, forget
My regal ſtate, and to his face confront him:
Confound th' audacious villain with my preſence,
And add new terrors to th' uplifted axe. [*Exit.*

SCENE, *The Tower.*

Eſſex *and* Southampton *diſcovered.*

Eſſex. Oh, name it not! my friend ſhall live, he ſhall;
I know her royal mercy, and her goodneſs,
Will give you back to life, to length of days,
And me to honour, loyalty, and truth.
Death is ſtill diſtant far.
South. In life's firſt ſpring
Our green affections grew apace and proſper'd;
The genial ſummer ſwell'd our joyful hearts,
To meet and mix each growing fruitful wiſh.
We're now embark'd upon that ſtormy flood
Where all the wiſe and brave are gone before us,
Ere ſince the birth of time, to meet eternity.
And what is death, did we conſider right?
Shall we, who fought him in the paths of terror,
And fac'd him in the dreadful walks of war,
Shall we aſtoniſh'd ſhrink, like frighted infants,
And ſtart at ſcaffolds, and their gloomy trappings?
Eſſex. Yet, ſtill I truſt long years remain of friendſhip.
Let ſmiling hope drive doubt and fear away,
And death be baniſh'd far; where creeping age,
Diſeaſe, and care, invite him to their dwelling.

I feel

I feel aſſurance riſe within my breaſt,
That all will yet be well.

South. Count not on hope——
We never can take leave, my friend, of life,
On nobler terms. Life! what is life? A ſhadow!
Its date is but th' immediate breath we draw;
Nor have we ſurety for a ſecond gale;
Ten thouſand accidents in ambuſh lie
For the embody'd dream.
A frail and fickle tenement it is,
Which, like the brittle glaſs that meaſures time,
Is often broke, ere half its ſands are run.

Eſſex. Such cold philoſophy the heart diſdains,
And friendſhip ſhudders at the moral tale.
My friend, the fearful precipice is paſt,
And danger dare not meet us more. Fly ſwift,
Ye better angels, waft the welcome tidings
Of pardon to my friend; of life and joy.

Enter Lieutenant.

Lieut. I grieve to be the meſſenger of woe,
But muſt, my lords, intreat you to prepare
For inſtant death. Here is the royal mandate
That orders your immediate execution.

Eſſex. Immediate execution!—What, ſo ſudden!
No meſſage from the queen, or Nottingham?

Lieut. None, Sir.

Eſſex. Deluded hopes! Oh, worſe than death!
Perfidious queen, to make a mock of life!
My friend, my friend deſtroy'd! Oh! piercing thought!
Oh, diſmal chance!—In my deſtruction ruin'd!
In my ſad fall undone! Why could not mine,
My life atone for both; my blood appeaſe?
Can you, my friend, forgive me?

South. Yes, O yes,
My boſom's better half, I can.—With thee
I'll gladly ſeek the coaſt unknown, and leave
The leſſening mark of irkſome life behind.
With thee, my friend, 'tis joy to die! 'tis glory!
For who would wait the tardy ſtroke of time,
Or cling, like reptiles, to the verge of being,
When we can bravely leap from life at once,
And ſpring triumphant in a friend's embrace?

Enter

Enter Raleigh

Ral. To you, my lord Southampton, from the queen
A pardon comes: your life her mercy ſpares.

Eſſex. For ever bleſt be that indulgent power
Which ſaves my friend! This weight ta'en off, my ſoul
Shall upward ſpring, and mingle with the bleſt.

South. All-ruling Heavens, can this, can this be juſt?
Support me; hold, ye ſtraining heart ſtrings, hold,
And keep my ſinking frame from diſſolution.
Oh, 'tis too much for mortal ſtrength to bear,
Or thought to ſuffer! No, I'll die with thee.
They ſhall not part us, Eſſex.

Eſſex. Live, Oh, live,
Thou nobleſt, braveſt, beſt of men and friends,
Whilſt life is worth thy wiſh, till time and thou
Agree to part, and nature ſend thee to me;
Thou gen'rous ſoul, farewell!—live and be happy;
And, oh! may life make largely up to thee
Whatever bleſſing fate has thus cut off
From thy departing friend!

Lieut. My lord, my warrant
Strictly forbids to grant a moment's time.

South. Oh, muſt we part for ever?—Cruel fortune!
Wilt thou then tear him hence?—'Severe divorce!'
Let me cling round thy ſacred perſon ſtill,
Still claſp thee to my boſom cloſe, and keep
Stern fate at diſtance.

Eſſex. Oh, my friend, we'll meet
Again where virtue finds a juſt reward,
Where factious malice never more can reach us.
Recall thy reaſon, be thyſelf once more.—
I fear it not.—This hideous monſter, death,
When ſeen at diſtance, ſhocks weak nature's eye;
But reaſon, as it draws more near, defies it.——
I thank thy ſorrows, but cou'd ſpare 'em now.
I need not bid thee guard my fame from wrongs:
And, oh! a dearer treaſure to thy care
I truſt, than either life or fame—my wife!
Her bitter ſorrows pierce my ſoul; for her
My heart drops blood!—Oh, ſhe will want a friend!
Then take her to thy care; do thou pour balm
On her deep-wounded ſpirit, and let her find

My

My tender helps in thee.—I muſt be gone,
My ever faithful, and my gallant friend.—
I pr'ythee leave this woman's work.—Farewell!—
Take this laſt, dear embrace.—Farewell for ever!
South. My burſting breaſt!—I fain would ſpeak, but
Are poor——Farewell!——— [words
But we ſhall meet again, embrace in one
Eternal band, which never ſhall be loos'd. [*Exit.*
Eſſex. To death's concluding ſtroke, lead on, lieutenant.
My wife!—Now reaſon, fortitude, ſupport me;
For now, indeed, comes on my foreſt trial.
Enter Counteſs of Rutland.
Eſſex. Oh, thou laſt, dear reſerve of fortune's malice!
For fate can add no more—Oh, com'ſt thou then
In this dread hour, when all my ſtraining thoughts
Are ſtruggling in the tendereſt ties of nature!
Oh, com'ſt thou now t'arreſt my parting ſoul,
And force it back to life!
Rut. Thou ſole delight,
Thou only joy which life cou'd ever give,
Or death deprive me of; my wedded lord!
I come, with thee determin'd to endure
The utmoſt rigour of our angry ſtars:
To join thee, fearleſs, in the graſp of death,
And ſeek ſome dwelling in a world beyond it.
Eſſex. Too much, thou partner of this diſmal hour,
Thy gen'rous ſoul would prompt thee to endure;
Nor can thy tender, trembling heart ſuſtain it.
Long years of bliſs remain in ſtore for thee;
And ſmiling time his treaſures ſhall unfold
To bribe thy ſtay!
Rut. Thou cruel comforter!
Alas! what's life, what's hated life to me:
'Can aught beneath this ſtarry hemiſphere,
'Which earth's extent, and nature's wealth can yield,
'Which proud ambition ſtretches to enjoy,
'Or paſſion pants for, recompenſe thy loſs?'
Alas! this univerſe, this goodly frame,
Shall all as one continued curſe appear,
And every object blaſt, when thou art gone.
Eſſex. Oh, ſtrain not thus the little ſtrength I've left,
The weak ſupport that holds up life, to bear

A few

A few ſhort moments more, its weight of woe,
Its loſs of thee. Oh, turn away thoſe eyes,
Nor with that look melt down my fix'd reſolve;
And yet a little longer let me gaze
On that lov'd form. Alas! I feel my ſight
Grows dim, and reaſon from her throne retires;
For pity's ſake, let go my breaking heart,
And leave me to my fate.

Rut. Why wilt thou ſtill
Of parting talk, ſince life its thouſand gates
Unbars to let us through together? 'Death
'Is but a ſtep that reaches to eternity.'
Oh, that the friendly hand of Heav'n wou'd ſnatch
Us both at once, above the diſtant ſtars,
Where fortune's venom'd ſhafts can never pierce,
Nor cruel queens deſtroy!—'Nay, look not ſo.'

Eſſex. The awful Searcher, whoſe impartial eye
Explores the ſecrets of each human heart,
And every thought ſurveys, can witneſs for me,
How cloſe thy image clings around my ſoul:
Retards each riſing wiſh, and draws me back
To life, entangled by that lov'd idea.
When fell neceſſity thoſe ties ſhall break,
For quickly break they muſt——when I from earth
On faith's white angel wings to Heaven ſhall ſoar,
Thy laſting form ſhall ſtill my mind poſſeſs,
Where bliſs ſupreme each faculty o'erwhelms,
And raptur'd angels glow.

Lieut. My lord, 'the time
'Too far is ſtretch'd;' it now grows late.

Eſſex. Lead on.

Rut. Stay, ſtay, my love! my deareſt, dying lord!
Ah, whither wouldſt thou go? Ah, do not leave me!
Alas! I'll haſten to attend your flight;
And nature gives conſent we ſhould not part.
I feel each faculty for fate prepare,
And my quick ſoul wou'd fain ſet out before you.
'Oh, precious pangs!—Oh, dear diſtreſs! ſtill cloſer
'To thy quick throbbing heart let mine complain,
'And on thy labouring boſom breathe my laſt!' [*Faints.*

Eſſex. Thou ſinking excellence! thou matchleſs woman!
Shall fortune rob me of thy dear embrace,

Or

Or earth's whole power, or death divide us now!
Stay, ſtay, thou ſpotleſs, injur'd ſaint, and take——
Lieut. My lord, already you have been indulg'd
Beyond what I can warrant by my orders.
Eſſex. Oh, let me on her dying boſom fall,
Embrace her ſpotleſs form!—One moment more
Afford me to my ſorrows———Oh, look there!
Cou'd bitter anguiſh pierce your heart, like mine,
You'd pity now the mortal pangs I feel,
The throbs that tear my vital ſtrings away,
And rend my agonizing ſoul.
Lieut. My lord———
Eſſex. But one ſhort moment, and I will attend.
Ye ſacred miniſters that virtue guard,
And ſhield the righteous in the paths of peril,
Reſtore her back to life, and lengthen'd years
Of joy; dry up her bleeding ſorrows all!
Oh, cancel from her thoughts this diſmal hour,
And blot my image from her ſad remembrance!
'Tis done.———
And now, ye trembling cords of life, give way:
Nature and time, let go your hold; eternity
Demands me. [*Exeunt* Eſſex *and Lieutenant.*
'*Woman.* She returns to life; ſee! help!'
Rut. Where has my loſt, benighted ſoul been wand'ring?
What means this miſt that hangs about my mind,
Through which reflection's painful eye diſcerns
Imperfect forms, and horrid ſhapes of woe?
The cloud diſpels, the ſhades withdraw, and all
My dreadful fate appears.—Oh, where's my lord,
My life! my Eſſex! Oh, whither have they ta'en him?

Enter Queen and Attendants.

Q. To execution! Fly with light'ning's wing,
And ſave him. 'Ha! by whoſe command was this?
'Stop, ſtop the fatal blow.—My fears were true.'
[*Exit one of the attendants.*
Rut. Thou ſaving angel, ſent from Heav'n! my queen,
My gracious queen, 'be quick!—the bloody Burleigh!
'A moment may deſtroy him! Stretch thy arm,
'Defend, defend!' O, ſnatch him from the blow!
Preſerve my huſband! 'O, Elizabeth,

'Look down upon me. Angels move her heart
'To pity; ſave him, ſave him, gracious queen!'
Q. Be calm, he ſhall not die. Riſe up. I came
To ſave his life.
Rut. 'Tis mercy's voice that ſpeaks.
My Eſſex ſhall again be mine. My queen,
My bounteous, gracious queen, has ſaid the word.
May troops of angels guard thy ſacred life,
And, in thy lateſt moments, waft thy ſoul
To meet that mercy, in the realms of joy,
Which now thy royal goodneſs grants to me!
Enter Burleigh.
Bur. Madam, your orders came, alas! too late.
Ere they arriv'd the axe had fallen on Eſſex.
Rut. Ha! dead! What hell is this that opens round me!
What fiend art thou that draws the horrid ſcene?
Ah, Burleigh! bloody murd'rer, where's my huſband!
'Oh! where's my lord, my Eſſex?'
Deſtruction ſeize and madneſs rend my brain!
See, ſee, they bend him to the fatal block;
Now, now the horrid axe is lifted high,
It falls, it falls; he bleeds, he bleeds; he dies!
Q. Alas, her ſorrows pierce my ſuffering heart.
Rut. Eternal diſcord, tear the ſocial world,
'And nature's laws diſſolve! expunge, eraſe
'The hated marks of time's engraving hand,
'And every trace deſtroy!' Ariſe, deſpair,
'Aſſert thy rightful claim,' poſſeſs me all!
Bear, bear me to my murder'd lord, to claſp
His bleeding body in my dying arms,
And in the tomb embrace his dear remains,
And mingle with his duſt for ever. [*Exit.*
Q. Hapleſs woman!
She ſhall henceforth be partner of my ſorrows;
And we'll contend who moſt ſhall weep for Eſſex.
Oh, quick to kill, and ready to deſtroy, [*To* Burleigh.
Cou'd no pretext be found, no cauſe appear,
To lengthen mercy out a moment more,
And ſtretch the ſpan of grace? Oh, cruel Burleigh!
This, this was thy dark work, unpitying man!
Bur. My gracious miſtreſs, blame not thus my duty,
My firm obedience to your high command.

The laws condemn'd him firſt to die; nor think
I ſtood between your mercy and his life.
It was the lady Nottingham, not I.
Herſelf confeſs'd it all in wild deſpair,
That from your majeſty to Eſſex ſent,
With terms of proffer'd grace, ſhe then receiv'd
From his own hand a fatal ring, a pledge
It ſeems of much importance, which the earl
With earneſt ſuit, and warm entreaty, begg'd her,
As ſhe would prize his life, to give your majeſty.
In this ſhe fail'd—In this ſhe murder'd Eſſex.

Q. Oh, barbarous woman!
Surrounded ſtill by treachery and fraud!
'What bloody deed is this! Thou injur'd Eſſex!'
My fame is ſoil'd to all ſucceeding times:
But Heav'n alone can view my breaking heart;
Then let its will be done.———

From hence, let proud, reſiſting mortals know
The arm parental, and the indulgent blow.
To Heaven's corrective rod ſubmiſſive bend;
Adore its wiſdom, on its power depend;
Whilſt ruling juſtice guides eternal ſway,
Let nature tremble, and let man obey.

EPILOGUE,

By an unknown Hand.

Spoken originally by Mrs. CIBBER.

NEWS! News! good folks, rare news, and you ſhall know it.—
I've got intelligence about our poet.
Who do you think he is?—You'll never gueſs;
An Iriſh Bricklayer, neither more or leſs.
And now the ſecret's out, you cannot wonder,
That in commencing bard he made a blunder.
Has he not left the better for the worſe,
In quitting ſolid brick for empty verſe?
Can he believe th' example of Old Ben,
Who chang'd, like him, the trowel for the pen,
Will in his favour move your critic bowels?——
You rather wiſh, moſt poets pens were trowels.
The man is honeſt, ſenſible, and plain,
Nor has the poet made him pert, or vain:
No beau, no courtier, nor conceited youth;
But then ſo rude, he always ſpeaks the truth:
I told him he muſt flatter, learn addreſs,
And gain the heart of ſome rich patroneſs:
'Tis ſhe, ſaid I, your labours will reward,
If you but join the bricklayer with the bard;
As thus——Should ſhe be old and worſe for wear,
You muſt new-caſe her, front her, and repair;
If crack'd in fame, as ſcarce to bear a touch,
You cannot uſe your trowel then too much;
In ſhort, whate'er her morals, age, or ſtation,
Plaiſter and white waſh in your dedication.
Thus I adviſ'd—but he deteſts the plan:
What can be done with ſuch a ſimple man?
A poet's nothing worth and nought availing,
Unleſs he'll furniſh where there is a failing.
Authors in theſe good times are made and us'd,
To grant theſe favours nature has refus'd.
If he won't fib, what bounty can he crave?
We pay for what we want, not what we have.——

Nay,

EPILOGUE.

Nay, tho' of ev'ry bleſſing we have ſtore,
Our ſex will always wiſh——a little more.——
If he'll not bend his heart to this his duty,
And ſell, to who will buy, wit, honour, beauty;
The bricklayer ſtill for him the proper trade is,
Too rough to deal with gentlemen and ladies.——
In ſhort—they'll all avoid him, and neglect him,
Unleſs that you, his patrons, will protect him.

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